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7TH DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY, AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

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May 1, 2024

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing
and Urban Development

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing
and Urban Development

Dear Chair Womack and Ranking Member Quigley,

I am requesting \$1,911,600 under Fiscal Year 25 for the Tohono O'odham Nation under the Department of Transportation (DOT) Highway Infrastructure Projects for the San Miguel Subdivision Road Improvement Project.

The funding will be used to grade, drain, and pave (and if necessary, realign the roadway within the right of way) one mile of BIA Route 192 that is used by San Miguel Community residents, school buses, law enforcement, emergency responders, and other road users.

The Tohono O'odham Nation ("Nation") Reservation encompasses about 2.8 million acres and includes over 734 miles of BIA roads, including BIA Route 192 which runs along the Reservation's southern border with Mexico. BIA Route 192 is an unimproved earthen road that is a school bus route and the main access road for dozens of families that live in the San Miguel Community of the Nation's Chukut Kuk District.

This project is a high priority for the Nation since the area consists of many small washes. Rainstorms, which are frequent and heavy during monsoon season, result in flooding and damage to the road surface, and vehicles often become stuck in the mud. The unpaved road has an extremely uneven, washboard surface. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) is a frequent user of the road due to its location near the border. CBP, by agreement with BIA and Chukut Kuk District, has provided some minimal maintenance for Route 192 because the road conditions are so poor they cause problems for CBP vehicles traveling the road. This minimal maintenance is not a permanent solution -- further maintenance is required after heavy rains or at least every six months, and the road elevation is not maintained, creating new washes and further drainage problems.

The Nation's Planning and Economic Development Department will administer and oversee the project if funded. The requested funding will be used as follows:

- Hard costs (clearing, asphalt, grading, landscaping, signage, pavement markings):
\$1,082,599.20

- Soft costs (design, traffic control, construction administration, mobilization/demobilization): \$829,000.80

The Nation is currently in the initial planning and evaluation stages for this project. Because this project is within the existing BIA right-of-way, it would be subject to a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Nation will update its request to BIA for a categorical exclusion. This project has not previously received federal funds. The total cost of the project is \$1,911,600 and the Nation could obligate all appropriated funds within 12 months after enactment. The funding will be used for planning, evaluation, and construction costs, which would fully fund the project. Upon receipt of funding, the Nation could complete the project within 18 months.

The Tohono O'odham Legislative Council approved adding the San Miguel Subdivision Project to the Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan (TTIP) by Resolution No. 22-208 (June 10, 2022). The San Miguel Subdivision Project is included in the 2023 DOT/BIA Tribal Transportation Improvement Program for the State of Arizona.

This is a capital project, including project-specific planning and design, that clearly falls within the eligibility requirements of 23 U.S.C. § 202, which provides funding for, inter alia, transportation planning, engineering, signage, and construction of tribal transportation facilities located within tribal land.

Community partners in support of this project include the Nation's Legislative Council, Department of Public Safety (Fire Department), Baboquivari Unified School District #40, the Nation's Chukut Kuk District and Schuk Toak District, and local community members.

During rainstorms, conditions on this unpaved road are so bad that school buses will not drive on it, and vehicles often get stuck in the mud. When it is not raining, the roads' washboard surface is so rough and uneven that the Nation's members, school buses, and tribal and federal law enforcement personnel who use BIA Route 192 frequently must have their vehicles repaired because they have been damaged by the road surface. The unpaved surface of BIA Route 192 generates so much dust that children who live along the road cannot play outside. This project would be a good use of taxpayer funds because these conditions are simply unacceptable and unsafe for everyone who uses this road, and BIA's Tribal Transportation Program does not have adequate funding to address them. Without this funding, the safety and access benefits provided by this project otherwise will be delayed for years. This project that will greatly enhance safety and access for the Nation's members, tribal and federal law enforcement, and all drivers using BIA Route 192.

Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress